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S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

St. *Andrew's*, DUBLIN,

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE

HOUSE of COMMONS,

ON FRIDAY THE

Twenty-third of *October*, 1747.

Being the ANNIVERSARY of the

IRISH REBELLION.

By JOHN ALCOCK, D.D. Dean of *Ferns*,
And Chaplain to his EXCELLENCY *WILLIAM* Earl of *Harrington*.

Published by Order of the House of Commons.

D U B L I N :

Printed for S. HYDE Bookseller in *Dame-street*. MDCCXLVII.

Sabbati 24^o Die Octobris 1747^o.

ORDERED,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Dean John Alcock, for the excellent Sermon by him preach'd before this House Yesterday, at St. Andrew's Church, and that he be desired to print the same, and that Mr. Downes and Colonel St. Leger do acquaint him therewith.

E. Sterling, } Cler' Dom' Com'
H. Alcock, }

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S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D A T

St. *Andrew's*, DUBLIN, &c.

St. LUKE Chap. ii. Ver. 14.

*Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth
Peace, good Will towards Men.*

THE Advantages and Blessings arising to Society from the Profession and Practice of true Religion are so obvious, that there cannot be a greater Instance of the Corruption of the World, than the Necessity we are still under of proving, and enforcing them upon the Minds, and Consciences of Men.

After

After all the great Things God has done to establish Religion and Righteousness upon Earth ; when he has condescended to make so clear a Revelation of his Will, and to enforce it by such awful Sanctions ; has encouraged our Obedience to his Laws by such inestimable Rewards ; and guards against the Transgression of them by such awakening Terrors ; has blended our Duty and Interests so intirely together, that they are absolutely one and inseparable ; and has so framed his Religion, that one great Object and End of it is the promoting Order and Peace amongst Men ; so that the more steddily they are pursued, the more confessedly prosperous every Individual is rendered ; since all these Things are so, it is very surprizing to find any Man of so irregular an Understanding, or perverse a Heart, as either to deceive himself, or labour to deceive others.

From the universal, and infinite Importance of Religion, Mankind seem to have a Right to expect, that God himself should determine and fix the true Notion of it : that all Men of all Capacities might readily understand, and chearfully acquiesce in the Sense and Meaning thereof : And how exactly this has been done appears from the whole Tenor of the Gospel, and the Words of my Text particularly ; which as they are the most solemn Introduction to the Christian Dispensation, and spoken by Angels in Honour

Honour of God who appointed it ; so do they contain a most perfect Definition of Religion in general ; and comprehend the Spirit, and distinguishing Mark of the Christian Religion in particular : The End and Object whereof is to promote *Glory to God in the Highest ; and on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men.*

The unprejudiced Light of Nature could never direct us to any other Foundation or Ends in Religion. And our Blessed Saviour who came into the World to restore and improve this original Light, which had been greatly darkened by Ignorance and Vice, has in all his Precepts relating to this great Point established it in the clearest Manner.

The World before his Appearance was wretchedly mistaken about it. The *Heathen* Part was as it were *without God in the World* : For by Degrees, as Men corrupted their Manners, so they fell off from the Knowledge of the True God ; and in proportion as they forgot him became Savage, and Barbarous, 'till they had lost all Sense of the true Dignity of their Nature ; of their Alliance to their Creator, of their immediate Dependance upon him ; and of his present and future Judgments.

As to the *Jews* however exalted their Notions were of God at first, yet they soon fell into great Mistakes concerning him. Partial to themselves ; and narrow-minded with respect to others : For be-

ing used to consider and address their Creator as the *God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*, they forgot that he was likewise the God of the Universe: And provided Matters went well with the Handful of *Israel*, were almost unconcerned for the rest of Mankind; whom they considered as very little better, than out of the Protection and Favour of God.

Thus Matters stood without Hope of Amendment 'TILL CHRIST CAME; who made his Appearance, and established his Religion at the fittest Time for it; when human Learning had exerted its utmost Efforts; when Philosophy had sifted and tryed all Opinions, and found no settled Principles, no certain System of Religion or Morality.

The Wisdom of God does every thing in the best Season and Order: And there cannot be a more idle Attempt than that of some modern Unbelievers, who would represent the several Dispensations of God as distinct, and contradictory to each other: For the least Enquiry into these Things makes it evident, that the *Patriarchal*, the *Jewish*, and *Christian Scheme*, are in the main Points One and the Same; and differ no otherwise from each other, than as the Beginning and Progress of any thing does from the End; but must be considered altogether as the gradual Manifestation of the Ways of God with Men.

During

During the Infancy of the World, the *Revelations* which were made to the *Patriarchal* Age were sufficient. And when they by Degrees had corrupted their Ways and introduced unworthy Notions of God, and false Modes of Worship, he separated a considerable Nation to keep up the true Knowledge of Him: And at last when the Manners of the *Jews* were corrupted, and *the Word of God rendered void by their Traditions* — When human Learning was advanced to such Perfection, that it seemed almost to have reached its utmost Bounds — When all the Power, and Knowledge, and Riches of the World were collected together, and one mighty Nation possessed them all; and when the Vices too of that Nation were at the Height; and, as their own Historian says, they could neither bear them, nor the Remedies for them — Then, *when the fullness of Time was come*, did *Jesus Christ* appear; then was the Saviour and the Healer of the World born; who removing the Vail, and breaking down all Enclosures, has laid all open to the Mercies of God, *which are now more evidently over all his Works*; being offered not to the Men of *Israel* only, not to the Men of *Jerusalem*; but to Men of all Nations, and of all Languages, *from the rising of the Sun, to the going down of the Same*. We may then well expect this last Dispensation to be perfect: We may expect to find every Motive,
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every Argument, every Assistance to raise our Adoration of God, and our Love for Man. We may pronounce that *the Hour* not only *cometh* but now is, *when the true Worshipers worship the Father in Spirit, and in Truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* Now we find the Majesty of God in his true and glorious Character; every Attribute of his Blessed Nature brought almost to the Level of Man's Understanding.—Here we find him the Creator, the Preserver, the gracious Father, and Friend, and Redeemer of Mankind; rejoicing in the Happiness and Prosperity of the Universe, *the God of all Mercy and Consolation; of Forbearance and Forgiveness; and* looking upon Punishment and Terror as his *strange Work.* Here we find the true Foundation of Morality deeply laid upon the solid Principles of the Will of God, and the Reason, and Nature, and Fitness of Things; comprehending in it every possible Action and Relation in which Mankind can be considered; and overflowing with universal Love and Charity, with *Peace and good Will towards Men.*

From so excellent an Institution we might long ago have expected the happiest Effects: We might well have expected that it should have been the Belief, and Practice, and Joy of the whole World: And from the rapid Progress which the Gospel at first made, when it was taught and received in its native Purity

Purity and Simplicity, that *the Earth should have been covered with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.*

And indeed it is well worth the Consideration of every thoughtful Person why a Religion so admirably contrived for the Glory of God, and the Happiness of Man, should have made so slow a Progress as it has done since the fourth or fifth Century of Christianity. The CORRUPTIONS of the CHURCH of ROME seem to have been a principal Hindrance to the Advancement of the Gospel, and to them I shall at present confine myself.

The Prophets and holy Apostles have foretold, and prepared the World to expect the Appearance of a very extraordinary Power, of long Continuance, *and diverse from all other Kingdoms and Powers upon Earth; dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and suffered by the unsearchable Providence of God, to make War with the Lamb; to be drunken with the Blood of his Saints — To change Times, and Laws; and to make the Kings, and Inhabiters of the Earth drunk with the Wine of her Fornications; and so intoxicated with her Delusions, as to have all one Mind, and to give their Power and Strength unto the Beast.* A tremendous Power indeed! which has risen to that height of spiritual Pride as to carry a very near Resemblance to that *Man of Sin* which St. Paul has told us was to be

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revealed,

revealed, *That Son of Perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped—So that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God shewing himself that he is God, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders; and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness in them that Perish, because they received not the Love of the Truth that they might be saved. Departing from the Truth; giving Heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrine of Devils, speaking Lies in Hypocrisy, having their Consciences seared with a hot Iron; forbidding to Marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats which God hath created to be received with Thanksgiving of them, which believe and know the Truth.*

I am well aware that all this is prophetick Language; and therefore we ought not to be too Peremptory in asserting the full Import, and Meaning of it; but I am justified by Writers of the greatest Credit, and Authority, in applying them to the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*: And whosoever will seriously consider what they have written on that Head will be more and more Struck, and perhaps convinced too of the Justness of the Application.

For what Power but that of Popery is diverse from all other Powers upon Earth? arrogating to itself a Dominion within every other Dominion; and that too, not only over the Consciences and Souls, but the Bodies and Fortunes of Men. What

What Power but that of Popery can be properly said to *make War with the Lamb, and to be drunken with the Blood of the Saints, and with the Blood of the Martyrs of Jesus?* imagining that the Kingdom of *Christ* is to be established by Methods subversive of every Kingdom upon Earth; by Plots, and Assassinations, and Massacres; and by that infernal Tribunal the Inquisition; where the best of Men have often been condemned to the cruelest Tortures, for no other Crime, but professing to believe the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, as he himself has taught it: For which incorrigible Obstinacy *they have Trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments, they are stoned, they are sawn asunder, are tempted, are slain with the Sword, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: Of whom the World is not worthy.* Who, tho' burning at the Stake *accept not a Deliverance*, which can only be purchased by denying *Christ*.

No Power but that of Popery has had Influence enough to change Times and Laws. The Gospel Times were to be Times of universal Righteousness, and spiritual holy Worship; they were to be Peaceable and blessed Times; that truly paradisaical State, so plainly foretold by the Prophets, to which the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity, if firmly believed and zealously practised in the Simplicity of the Gospel, would

would fully restore us; but from which by the CORRUPTIONS of POPERY we are still at such a Distance.

What Power but that of Popery has ever assumed so impious a Prerogative as *Bellarmin* has given the Popes; and which no Pope has ever solemnly refused, or censured him for giving? of changing the eternal Laws of God; of declaring Virtue to be Vice, and Vice Virtue; *Evil to be Good and Good Evil.*

There never was any Dominion but that of the Popes, to which so many Kings of the Earth have submitted, having with one *Mind given their Strength and Power unto the Beast*; and how that Beast has used it, many of the greatest Kings might sadly tell, when these Popes had troden upon their Necks, and trampled upon their Crowns; *exalting themselves above all that are called Gods*; which Kings in the Scripture Language frequently are.

Jesus Christ was indeed all Meekness and Humility, and has declared that *his Kingdom is not of this World*; yet his haughty pretended Vicars have claimed every Kingdom in it; and reserving to themselves what was the Capital of them all, have given and taken the Rest at their Pleasure; have dispensed with all Allegiance, and Oaths; have dissolved the most sacred Obligations that Subjects can give, or Princes receive, and held lawful *Kings in Chains, and their Nobles in Links of Iron.*

Never

Never any other Tyranny but that of *Rome* invented, and executed such unchristian Methods to establish their pretended Kingdom of *Christ*: As if it were his Will, or agreeable to his Laws, to make Nations desolate, in order to plant his Gospel among them. Our Saviour rebuked the mistaken Zeal of his Disciples for calling down Fire from Heaven on a small Village of *Samaritans*, who seemed to deserve some Chastisement for their want of common Hospitality; but his pretended Vicars shall interdict Kingdoms, and give up their Inhabitants to every kind of Barbarity, and Destruction; making the Name of God to be Blasphemed; the pure Religion of *Christ*, by their manner of teaching it, to be evil spoken of, and detested; and the Establishment of it, as by them corrupted, instead of a Blessing, to become the heaviest Curse that can befall any Land.

For can it be a Blessing to any People, to have a Religion forced upon them, that shocks common Sense, and is an Affront to the Reason of Mankind?

Can it be a Blessing to any Country to have it's Riches and Power at the Mercy of one, who prevents every Land, where he has Authority, from yielding her natural Strength to the natural Owners? *forbidding to marry*; and reserving by that unchristian Restraint many thousands of either Sex devoted to him, and to him alone, and ever ready to fasten his Shackles upon the rest of Mankind.

How much better had the poor *Indians* been in their Ignorance, than to *have so learned Christ*, as their inhuman Instructors taught them? can the few that have escaped

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their merciless Rage, think much better of their new Religion, than of that *Doctrine of Devils* which they left, to embrace it? being instructed, instead of feeding on the Flesh of Men, to eat the real Flesh of their God; to substitute Idol Altars, to Idol Altars; and instead of bowing to an Image of some favourite Demon of their own, to prostrate themselves before some favourite Images of their Invaders!

And can We, who have the History of the memorable Exploit of those Converters of Nations; and who know from their own Writers, that they murdered eleven Millions of innocent Souls in *America* alone, to establish the Kingdom, which they call the Kingdom of *Christ*! Can we have the least Doubt, that the Popes who commanded, and blest the good Work, and the Priests who executed their Commands, were *speaking Lies in Hypocrisy*, when they pretended the Honour of *Christ*; that *had their Consciences seared with a hot Iron*, when they felt so little Humanity?

We can have no doubt of the Truth of these Things, when we call to Remembrance the solemn Occasion upon which we meet here this Day — It is to imprint on our Minds a strong Sense of the Wickedness of those Principles, which under the Appearance of Religion, shed the innocent Blood of so many of our Ancestors with unspeakable Barbarity; and would have ended in the utter Ruin of them all, if Almighty God in his great Goodness had not *saved a Remnant, and plucked them like a Firebrand out of the Fire.*

But

But I shall not dwell on so ungrateful a Subject well known to us all ; but rather choose to mention how different our Treatment, and Conduct has been towards them — How we have *loved our Enemies, and blessed those who despitefully used us, and persecuted us.*

In our political Capacity we should be highly justified by the History of Popery, and the invariable Principles it pursues, to entrench our selves within the strongest penal Laws : But our Conduct in this Respect shews to all, *that will see*, that we have made those we have, for our own necessary Security, and not to hurt them. And how little Reason they have to complain may best be known, from comparing their Grievances with what Protestants suffer in Popish Countries ; where the Rulers are not more sanguinary in framing their Laws, than rigorous in the Execution of them.

Instead of forcing their Consciences, and *compelling them to come in* by Fire and Sword, and the Torments of an Inquisition ; we have, in Imitation of our blessed Saviour, made use of the gentle Methods of Perswasion and Charity. Against all their Malice and Cruelty, we only armed our selves with the *Armour of God* ; with his holy Bible, *that Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* They came to us as *Goliath* did to *David* with their Mouths full of Blasphemy, *with a Sword, and with a Spear, and with a Shield* ; but we came to them like God's Champion—*In the Name of the Lord.*

This may serve to point out in general how gentle our Behaviour has been to that cruel Sect—and how charitable it

it has been to their Bodies as well as Souls, is already well known to the World from many Instances; and particularly from that signal one, which cannot be too much praised, nor too much recommended to us — The Foundation of CHARTER-SCHOOLS under his Royal MAJESTY: Who from his unbounded Liberality in this truly christian Cause, doubly deserves that exalted Title of the DEFENDER OF OUR FAITH.

This Kingdom already begins to feel the Blessings of this noble Institution in the Advancement of our Religion, and the Improvements of Industry.—I need not descend to Particulars, as I am very sensible I am speaking before those, who are both JUDGES and PATRONS of it.

This we may be sure of, that if we persevere in that excellent Spirit which began, and has already brought this Work so far towards it's Perfection, we cannot fail of intailing Happiness on our Posterity. For it is an everlasting Truth, founded in the Experience of Mankind from the Beginning of the World, that the Happiness of a Nation rises in Proportion to the good Manners, the Industry, and Religion of it's In habitants.—This is the Voice of Reason, sanctified by the Authority of God in his holy Scriptures. And that we may all feel so happy an Effect in this our Generation, and transmit it to late Posterity, from our Charity, and Piety, and Virtue; from our Endeavours to promote *Peace on Earth, and good Will towards Men*.—May God in his infinite Mercy grant, thro' *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *Amen*.

F I N I S.